

ART ACROSS THE CURRICULUM | HISTORY

COLONY TO NATION: FEDERATION

LEVELS 5–6

OVERVIEW

This resource encourages students to consider multiple perspectives when examining historical events. Students interpret Colonial and Indigenous narratives on the Federation of Australia as expressed in art, comparing and contrasting the meanings and messages in each work. Then, they apply their comprehension and perceptions in a creative project which depicts their interpretation of the impacts and effects of Federation.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Analyse and interpret narratives associated with Federation in artworks from different cultural perspectives.
- Compare and contrast various viewpoints expressed in artworks that explore the theme of Federation.
- Design, produce and present a comic strip depicting a narrative about Federation from either a Colonial or Indigenous perspective.

LINKS TO THE VICTORIAN HISTORY CURRICULUM

Levels 5 & 6

- Sequence significant events and lifetimes of people in chronological order to create a narrative to explain the developments in Australia's colonial past and the causes and effects of Federation on its people (VCHHC082)
- Explain the causes of significant events that shaped the Australian colonies, contributed to Australian Federation and the effects of these on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and migrants (VCHHC086)

KEY ARTWORKS

1. NGV'S AUSTRALIAN COLLECTION

Julie Dowling, Badimaya born
Federation series: 1901–2001,
2001
Melbin 1901–1910
Uncle Sam 1910–1920
Auntie Dot 1920–1930
Ruby 1930–1940
Mollie 1940–1950
George 1950–1960
Nan 1960–1970
Ronnie 1970–1980
Carol 1980–1990
Julie 1990–2001
synthetic polymer paint, earth
pigments, metallic paint and
glitter on canvas
(1–10) 60.6 × 555.0 cm
(variable) (overall)



Julie Dowling (b.1969), is an artist of Badimaya, Irish and Scottish Catholic heritage, from Subiaco in Western Australia. Dowling draws on diverse art traditions including European portraiture and Christian icons, mural painting, dotting and Indigenous Australian iconography. She produces artwork to record personal histories and instances of injustice and racism suffered by Indigenous people as a form of resistance.



Frederick McCubbin
The pioneer, 1904
Oil on canvas
225.0 × 295.7 cm

Frederick McCubbin (1855–1917) was born in Melbourne during the Gold Rush. A key figure in the development of Australian Impressionism, he is considered one of Australia's most important painters from the late nineteenth century. From the 1890s, he created large-scale landscapes which showed recent history in colonial Australia, often celebrating pioneering narratives as heroic and an emerging sense of national identity.

WARM UP

2. PERSPECTIVES ON MAJOR LIFE EVENTS



IN SCHOOL

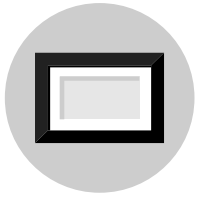
Australia became a nation on 1 January 1901 when 6 British colonies—New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania—united to form the Commonwealth of Australia. This process is known as Federation. It was a political accomplishment that took many years of planning and several referenda to achieve, impacting all facets of Australian society.

With this major event in Australia's history in mind, students will consider how major planned life events can impact individuals, families and communities in our contemporary everyday lives.

1. As a class, brainstorm a list of life events which require planning and preparation and are typically experienced over the course of a lifetime.
2. Split into groups of three or four. Which of the five events on your list are the most life changing? Rank them 1–5. Consider:
 - What is involved when planning and preparing for the event?
 - Who is affected, and how are they involved in preparations?
 - How long do the preparations generally take?
 - What affect does the event have on the lives of those involved?
 - What are the short- and long-term consequences or impacts of the event?
3. Compare your list of ranked life events with another group. Identify the similarities and differences between the lists and determine the reasons for the differences in opinions and perspectives.
4. Finish with a class discussion:
 - What influenced and informed your decisions?
 - What was interesting or surprising when comparing your list with another group?
 - What can this exercise teach us about differing viewpoints and perspectives?
 - How can considering differing viewpoints and perspectives help shape our understanding of historical events?

ACTIVITY

3. GENERATIONS OF FEDERATION



IN THE GALLERY



IN SCHOOL

Julie Dowling's *Federation Series 1901–2001, 2001*, was created at the time of the centenary of Australia's Federation. Indigenous Australians people were not consulted on the Australian constitution at the time of Federation, nor did the document include any reference to them.

Each of the ten panels features a family member who was affected by policies and events in successive decades after Federation. Their tormented, proud and resilient faces are surrounded by images, symbols and words which reference events that specifically impacted Indigenous people. In the artwork, Dowling celebrates the survival of her family and the growth of the Indigenous political movement throughout the twentieth century when, as she states, 'five generations of our family have had children taken away'.¹



Julie Dowling, Badimaya born
Federation series: 1901–2001, 2001

Melbin 1901–1910

Uncle Sam 1910–1920

Auntie Dot 1920–1930

Ruby 1930–1940

Mollie 1940–1950

George 1950–1960

Nan 1960–1970

Ronnie 1970–1980

Carol 1980–1990

Julie 1990–2001

synthetic polymer paint, earth pigments, metallic paint and glitter on canvas
(1–10) 60.6 × 555.0 cm
(variable) (overall)

3.1 SEE, THINK, WONDER

See, Think, Wonder is a three-step thinking routine from Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education. It encourages curiosity through close looking, careful observation and the sharing of thoughtful interpretations through three simple questions:

- What do you see?
- What do you think about that?
- What does that make you wonder?

For this first activity, it's best to not explain what the artwork is about.

1. Ask students to sit in front of the work in a place that allows them to see all ten portraits in *Federation Series 1901–2001* clearly
2. Before asking any questions or sharing any comments, students look at the artwork in silence for one-two minutes.
Try to take in as many details as possible including the unique features in each of the portraits, the subject matter, colours, patterns and symbols in the background of each painting and the way Julie Dowling has applied materials and techniques throughout the artwork.
3. Ask students to look at *Federation Series 1901–2001* again, this time recording what they see, think and wonder about the artwork using the three stems, "I see..., I think..., I wonder..."
4. Ask the students to share what they see, think and wonder.
Encourage students to build on one another's observations, questions and interpretations throughout the discussion.

3.2 FACES OF FEDERATION

The following passages are written by Julie Dowling, forming the artist's statement about the work.² For this activity, first explain what this artwork is about.

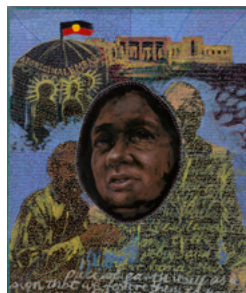
1. Read each of the following statements to the group. So that the students can guess which portrait the passage relates to, you may wish to omit the name of the family member (**highlighted in grey**) before confirming their identity later.
2. After each passage, ask students:
 - Which of Julie Dowling's relatives is this about?
 - What happened to her relative/s in this passage?
 - How has Julie Dowling expressed this in the portrait?



My Great Aunty Dot, Dorothy Passmore (née Latham), remembered the 1920s as being a time of great fear and confusion. Many children were being taken from their families. **My Aunty Dot** was placed into St Joseph's orphanage along with my grandmother, Mollie. They were eight and eleven, respectively. They lost most of their Badimaya language, and this experience changed their lives and the lives of their family forever.



During the 1950s, many children were taken away from their families and placed into non-Aboriginal families. This was a conservative era when Indigenous knowledge was considered inferior and the welfare of Indigenous children degenerated. This painting shows children's faces placed over a faceless white couple, ominous figures of a childlike nightmare. The hands represent the sentiment behind **Uncle George's** sense of futility in the face of this national campaign to 'civilise' and 'assimilate' another generation of children.



Veronica 'Ronnie' Dowling is my mother. She was the first person in our family to go on a protest march and to publicly speak out about injustice in our family because we are Aboriginal/Badimaya/Yamatji. Mum taught us from an early age to stand up for our rights and believe in our Aboriginality. The 1970s was filled with irony for me because my family was living in poverty... My mum raised my sister and me in a single parent family on welfare, receiving \$42 a fortnight.



I wanted to paint **myself** placed within the words WIK and MABO, which symbolise the era in which I live. This final work in a series illustrates that even after 100 years, the issue of who owns this land has not been resolved

(top down)
Julie Dowling, Badimaya born
Federation series: 1901–2001,
 2001 (detail)
Aunty Dot 1920–1930
George 1950–1960
Ronnie 1970–1980
Julie 1990–2001

3.3 BEYOND THE FACES OF FEDERATION

Find out the meanings of the following themes that Julie Dowling addresses in her work:

- The Stolen Generation
- Assimilation in Australia
- Aboriginal activism
- Native title
- Wik and Mabo decisions

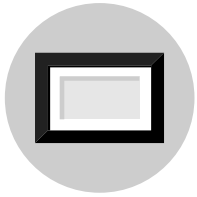
Once you know what they each mean answer the following questions:

- How does each one relate to Julie Dowling's artwork?
- In which portrait/s can we see evidence of these themes?
- How did Julie Dowling represent them in her artwork?
- How do you think each theme is linked to the laws, rules and decisions made at the time of Federation?

Based on what you have learned about the artwork so far, write a short paragraph that summarises Julie Dowling's views on the ongoing effects of Federation on her family.

ACTIVITY

4. READING HISTORY THROUGH ART



IN THE GALLERY



IN SCHOOL

Fred McCubbin's *The pioneer*, 1904, reflects Australian nationalism in the years immediately following Federation. It presents history through the life of a pioneering family, rather than through heroic incident or ceremonial occasion. Some viewers have suggested that the city in the distance is Melbourne, identifying the tall, protruding dome as the Royal Exhibition Building. This is the location where the first Federal Parliament was opened on May 9, 1901.

The first panel shows a young couple in an area of undisturbed bush. The horse and wagon suggest they have recently arrived and are setting up camp for the first night in their new surrounds. While the man is lighting a fire to boil the billy, the woman sits quietly and pensively, perhaps contemplating an unknown future or lamenting her past. The second panel appears to depict the same couple and setting but several years later. There is evidence of the land being cleared for a modest house and the woman is holding a baby. In the final panel, a man has happened upon a grave or memorial in the bush. A well-developed city in the distance suggests that several more years have passed. It is uncertain who has died and whether the male figure is the original pioneer, his son or a stranger who has visited the site to pay their respects to the hardworking, persevering pioneers that came before him.



Frederick McCubbin
The pioneer, 1904
Oil on canvas
225.0 × 295.7 cm

4.1 INTERPRETING THE NARRATIVE OF FRED MCCUBBIN'S *THE PIONEER*

Look carefully at the painting and take note of as many details as possible in each panel, considering how each panel might be connected.

Discuss what is happening in each panel:

Panel one (left)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Let's look at the first part of the painting; what's happening?• Who are these people? Where are they? What are they doing here? What are they going to do next? How can you tell?• How might they be feeling now? What makes you say that?
Panel two (middle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Now let's look at the second panel. What's happening in this painting?• What has changed? What remains the same?• Is there a connection to the first panel? What makes you think that?• How much time has passed since chapter one? How can you tell?
Panel three (right)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• So, now what's happening in panel three?• Where is this place? Is it the same place, or somewhere different? How can you tell?• Who is here? What might he be doing?• Is there a connection to panel one and/or two? What makes you think that?• How much time has passed since the scene in panel two? How can you tell?

4.2 LINKS TO FEDERATION: WHOSE PERSPECTIVE?

When you have finished interpreting each panel of the work:

- Identify any references to Australia's Federation within the artwork.
Consider the year the painting was made, the progression suggested over time and the city in the background which might elude to societal development.
- What perspective on Federation and the changes happening in Australia at the time does the artwork reflect? To whom does this perspective belong? Is this perspective a positive or negative one? How can we tell by looking at the painting?
- How might the painting have affected others' attitudes towards Federation?

4.3 EXPAND THE NARRATIVE

Draw your own interpretation of a fourth panel for the painting.

Prompt them with questions such as:

- How will you continue the story of *The pioneer* and expand its underlying views on Federation?
- Where will it be set? What will this place look like?
- Who will be there?
- How much time will have passed since the third panel?

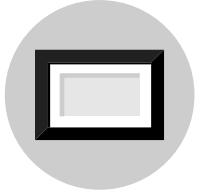
4.4 REFLECT

Form pairs to share your work and reflect on the following points:

- Describe what you included in your drawing, why you included it, the time in which it's set and how it relates to the story of *The pioneer* and its underlying views on Federation.
- How are each of your drawings similar or different? Why might these similarities and differences be present in your work?
- What can this exercise can teach us about differing viewpoints and perspectives?

ACTIVITY

5. COMPARING AND CONTRASTING PERSPECTIVES



IN THE GALLERY

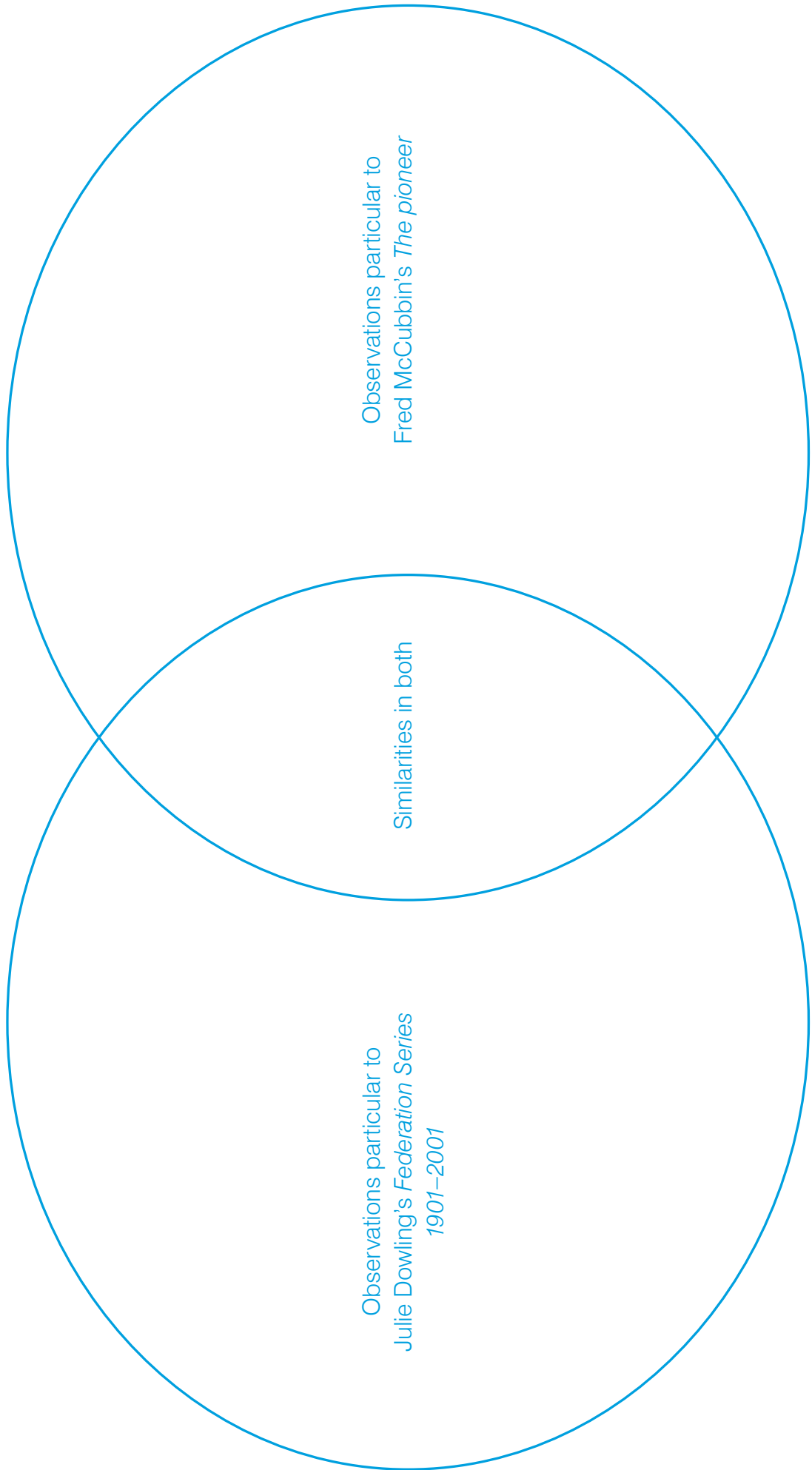


IN SCHOOL

Now that you have analysed and interpreted the work of both Julie Dowling and Fred McCubbin, it's time to discuss what they have in common and how they differ:

- What do the artworks have in common? How are they different?
Consider the artists' use of media/materials, the composition of each work, the culture and context in which each were made, the sequencing of events, narratives, moods/feeling etc.
- How does each artwork relate to Federation?
- What ideas and messages about Federation are being expressed in each work?
Consider the immediate, short-term and long-term effects of Federation suggested in each work.
- How is the story of McCubbin's pioneering family different to that of Julie Dowling's family? What are the reasons for these differences?

You may wish to print the Venn diagram overleaf to write down your answers.



ACTIVITY

6. ILLUSTRATE YOUR PERSPECTIVE



IN SCHOOL

Design, produce and present a one-page comic strip that expresses an interpretation of the effects of Federation.

Discuss

- What are the key elements in a comic strip?
For example, images, typical colour schemes, speech bubbles, a sequence of events in a story
- What similarities do a comic strips have with the artworks explored in this resource?
- Brainstorm perspectives on Federation that could be explored in comic strip
For example, colonial, indigenous, a man, a woman, a child, a family, good friends
- What might story your comic strip tell? Will it be about positive or negative impacts of Federation? Where and when will it be set?

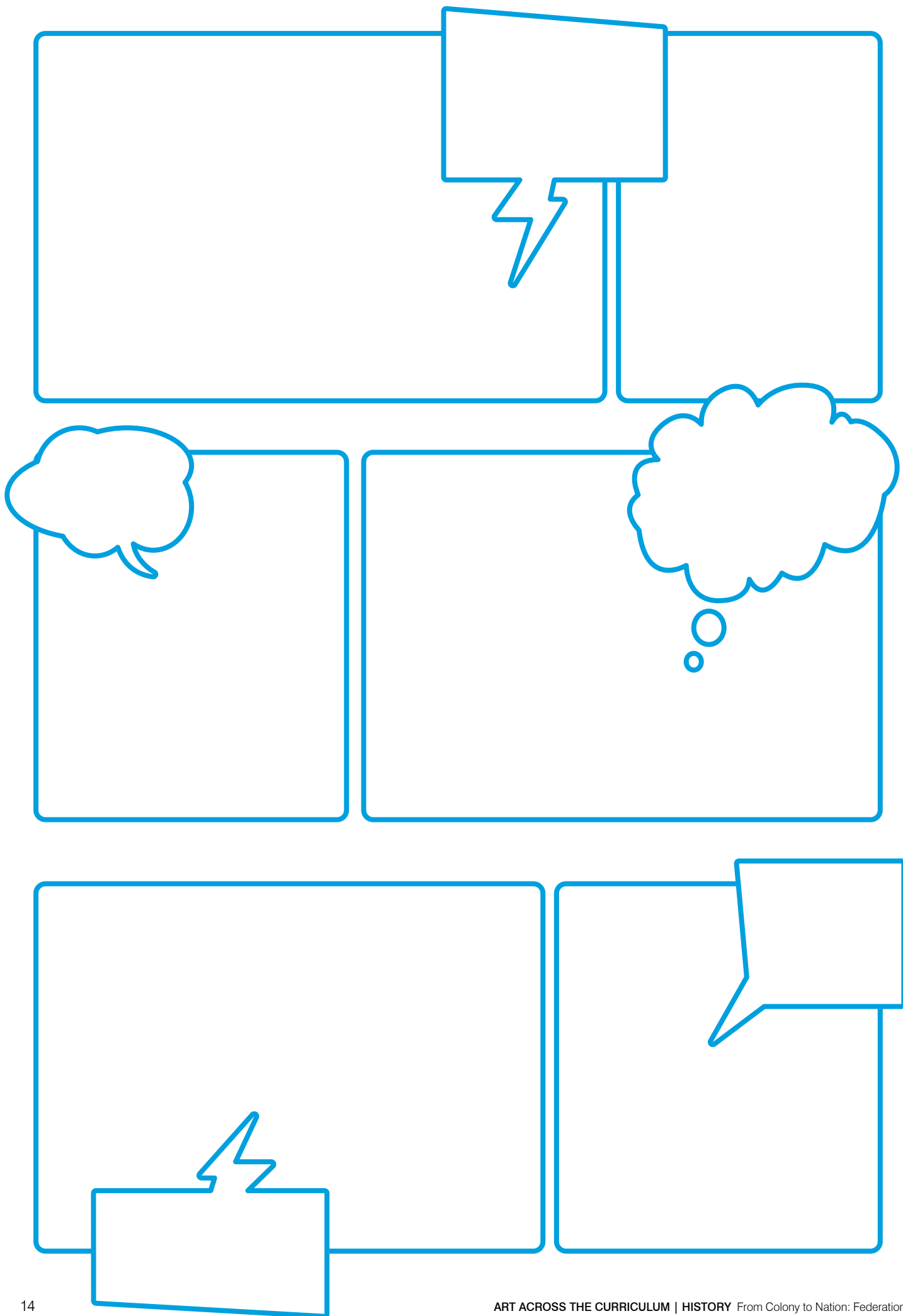
Create

1. Create a story board that includes basic sketches and key words for each panel in your story.
A storyboard is like a draft. It doesn't need to be particularly detailed or refined, but should present the story's sequence clearly.
2. Create a profile for the main character(s) in the comic strip.
Include anything relevant to the character(s) involvement in the story such as name, age, cultural background, where they live, occupation, personality traits, and how Federation generally affects them.
3. Sketch the main character(s) which visually represent the components of their profile(s).
4. Produce a final copy of the comic strip either using the template overleaf or by designing your own format.

Reflect

Look at each other's work and identify which comic strips express a similar view to your own and which ones are about a different interpretation of Federation.

- Pair up with a student whose comic strip depicts an opposing perspective and discuss the following questions:
- Whose perspective of Federation did you explore in your comic strip?
How have you shown it and what inspired you to express this view?
- Compare your work to your partner's. How are the views in each comic similar or different?
- What might the benefits be of considering multiple perspectives when examining historical events?



NOTES

1. Cathy Leahy and Judith Ryan (eds), *Colony Australia 1770–1861 / Frontier Wars*, Council of Trustees of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2018, p. 152
2. *ibid.* pp. 152–153

FURTHER RESOURCES

Julie Dowling, 2020, <https://www.juliedowling.net>, accessed 20 July 2020.

National Gallery of Victoria, 'Colony: Frontier Wars Artwork Labels', NGV, Victorian Government, <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibition/colony-frontier-wars/>, accessed 20 July 2020.

National Gallery of Victoria, 'Colony to Nation', 2020, NGV, Victorian Government, https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/school_resource/colony-to-nation

National Gallery of Victoria, 'Frederick McCubbin *The pioneer* 1904', NGV, Victorian Government, <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/frederick-mccubbin-the-pioneer-1904/>, accessed 20 July 2020.

National Gallery of Victoria, 'Watch Frederick McCubbin: The Pioneer Curator Talk', NGV, Victorian Government, <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/multimedia/frederick-mccubbin-the-artist/>, accessed 20 July 2020.

Project Zero, 2019, 'See, Think, Wonder: A Thinking Routine from Project Zero', *Project Zero*, Harvard Graduate School of Education, http://www.pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/See%20Think%20Wonder_2.pdf, accessed 20 July 2020.

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